



Monthly Drought Update
January 6, 2015
San Luis Obispo County

Note: Information provided in this update varies by date.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

U.S. Drought Monitor Status:

The latest U.S. Drought Monitor report released December 24, 2014, indicates San Luis Obispo County remains at the **D4 – Exceptional Drought intensity rating**. Approximately 94% of the state remains at a level D2 Severe Drought or worse with more than 32% of the state in a D4 – Exceptional Drought intensity rating. Due to recent rainfall throughout the state, the percentage of the state in a D4 intensity level fell from 55% since the last update.

San Luis Obispo County Precipitation Totals (in inches):

| Sub-Region | Area / Rain Station | Average Annual Rainfall | 2014-15 Water Year (July 2014-June 2015) | |
|-------------|--|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| | | | Cumulative Total | % of Total Average |
| North Coast | Cambria (ALERT #717) | 22.0 | 9.33 | 42% |
| | Whale Rock Reservoir (County Site #166.1) | 16.0 | 5.46 | 34% |
| Inland | Paso Robles (County Site #10.0) | 14.1 | 6.41 | 45% |
| | NE Atascadero (ALERT #711) | 17.0 | 4.06 * | 24% * |
| | Atascadero MWC (County Site #34.0) | 17.5 | 5.99 | 34% |
| | Santa Margarita (ALERT #723) | 24.0 | 6.69 | 28% |
| | Salinas Dam (County Site #94) | 20.9 | 6.42 | 31% |
| South Coast | SLO Reservoir (ALERT #749) | 24.0 | 6.53 | 27% |
| | Lopez Recreation Area (ALERT #707) | 23.0 | 5.84 | 25% |
| | West of Nipomo (CIMIS #202) | 14.8 | 5.06 | 34% |
| | Nipomo East (ALERT #728) | 18.0 | 6.26 | 35% |

Notes: This table contains provisional data from automated gauges and has not been verified. All units reported in inches.

* Due to an equipment malfunction, not all rain was recorded at this site.

Near-term Outlook for Precipitation:

Forecasts from the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center (CPC) indicate uncertainty about continued wet conditions. The Center's new January, February, and March seasonal precipitation outlook predicts that there is a 33-39% probability in extreme Northern California and a 40-49% probability that the remainder of California could experience above average precipitation. The trend for above average temperatures (50-59% probability) for California also looks to continue which would translate into less accumulated snowpack in the mid-elevations of the Sierra.

Reservoir Levels (% of capacity):

Note: Historical averages calculated using data from the following time frame:

Nacimiento: 1959 – 2013; Lopez: 1994-2013; Salinas: 1987-2013; and Whale Rock: 1985-2013.

| Reservoir | % of Capacity | Current Acre Feet Storage |
|------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Nacimiento | 22% | 81,695 |
| Whale Rock | 46% | 17,815 |
| Lopez | 41% | 20,486 |
| Salinas | 20% | 4,790 |

Source: www.slocountywater.org County of San Luis Obispo

STATE WATER

Status: The Department of Water Resources (DWR) continues to deliver State Water “Carryover” water for 2014 and DWR has increased its allocation for South of Delta Service Contractors from 0% to 5%. The Flood Control District is maximizing State Water deliveries to Zone 3 agencies. DWR’s preliminary 2015 delivery amounts are projected to be 10%. San Luis Reservoir is currently at 36% capacity, which is a substantial improvement from previous reports.

Actions: The Public Works Department has released a 2015 projected delivery schedule and met with sub-contractors to discuss 2015 projected deliveries with a zero delivery scenario. Staff is calculating what a potential increase to 10% deliveries would look like and will coordinate with sub-contractors as more information arises.

VULNERABLE WATER SYSTEMS**County Service Areas (CSA’s):****Santa Margarita (CSA 23)**

- Drought response level remains at ALERT status.
- Primary pumping is from shallow well No. 4; water is also being pumped from deep well No. 3 to reduce needs from well No. 4. State officials have also authorized the use of shallow wells 1 & 2 should the need arise.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted limiting outdoor watering. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.
- Staff is monitoring conditions for a potential status change to CRITICAL.

Shandon (CSA 16)

- Two wells currently provide all water to the Shandon community and continued to be monitored.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted limiting outdoor watering. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.

Cayucos (CSA 10A)

- Supply is available from Whale Rock and one on-site well. Staff has given a presentation to the Advisory Committee and business groups regarding conserving this supply.
- An emergency ordinance was adopted limiting outdoor watering. An informational mailer was sent to customers and signs in the community have been installed.

Avila Valley (CSA 12)

- Adequate supply is available from Lopez and State water “carryover” water sources for this year and next.

Chorro Valley Institutions (CMC, Animal Services, Sheriff, County Operations, Camp San Luis, Cuesta College, County Office of Education):

- 2014 State water carryover water is available and being provided.
- The existing distribution system is being evaluated to assure water losses are minimized.
- CMC is at 100% design of their water treatment plant upgrade project and will soon go out to bid.
- 2015 State Water and District carryover will provide supply for next year.
- Discussions with City of SLO to exchange Nacimiento for Whale Rock are being initiated if State Water is insufficient in 2016.

Non-County Operated:

- **Cambria Community Services District**

Status: Status: Emergency San Simeon Creek Brackish Water Supply Project; will be partially funded by emergency grant funds.

- **San Simeon Community Services District**
Status: CSD voluntarily dropped out of emergency grant project for recycled water project.
- **Heritage Ranch Community Services District**
Status: The Nacimiento River is the only available water source for the community of Heritage Ranch. The emergency inter-tie will be funded with emergency grant funds.
- **Rural Paso Robles residents**
Status: Continuing to identify water-trucking options and examine outreach efforts. See County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation Website for drought relief update information.

IMPACTS

Agricultural Impacts:

Staff from the County Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures and the University of California Cooperative Extension collaborated to monitor the effect of drought conditions and the impact of recent rain to agricultural operations. The following is a summary of comments and observations from local University of California Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors and agricultural producers.

Recent rainfall across the county and relatively warm temperatures has resulted in germination of certain forage plants and a visible green tint to our hillside rangeland areas. Current rangeland conditions are improved over the same time as last year. The outcome of the quality and quantity of plant material available for livestock grazing will be determined in the spring, 2015.

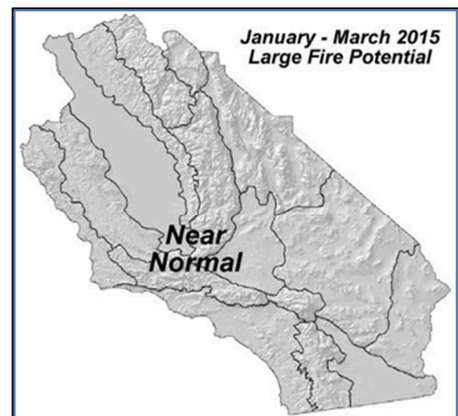
Early rains have helped moisten soil but so far, the total quantity has not been enough to refill the soil profile or leach salt, which has accumulated in many areas of the county. Vineyards and certain vegetable crops have been damaged by the increased salinity created by lack of flushing through normal levels of rainfall. Growing conditions will improve if we continue to receive above-average rainfall for the rest of the winter.

Fire Danger:

Fire Danger

To date, CAL FIRE has responded to **5,597 fires** across the state since January 1, burning **90,606 acres** in state responsibility areas. This year's fire activity is well above the year-to-date average of 4,620 wildfires and 88,107 acres burned. These statistics do not include fires on Federal jurisdiction. Current fire information indicates there are currently no uncontained state fires.

In San Luis Obispo County, from January through November, CAL FIRE has responded to **130 wildfires** which burned **119 acres**. Since 2007, averages for this same period of time are 171 wildfires burning 1,067 acres.



Equipment/Staffing:

Due to recent rains and moderating conditions, CAL FIRE announced the transition out of fire season beginning December 15. However, three wildland engines remain staffed and are available for State mission activities including vegetation management and other fire prevention work. On December 8, CAL FIRE lifted the burn ban and announced the start of this year's backyard burn season meaning burning on permissive burn days no longer requires a CAL FIRE permit, but an APCD permit only.

Live Fuel Moisture (LFM)

(LFM is the moisture content of live vegetation expressed as a percentage of the oven-dry weight.)

LFM values have improved but remain just above critical levels (60%) in most areas. Despite significant precipitation, LFM values for are expected to follow seasonal trends and increase slowly as plants respond to cooler weather and shorter days. Fall/winter dormancy prevents most species from responding quickly to precipitation and LFM values are not expected to increase substantially until next spring's growing cycle.

Dead Fuel Moisture

(The moisture content of dead organic fuels is another important component of the relative fire danger. As with LFM above, dead fuel moisture levels are a good indicator of how likely fuels are to ignite and how intensely they will burn. 100-hr fuel refers to vegetation between 1 and 3 inches in diameter and 1000-hr fuel is 3-6 inches. When the fuel moisture content is low, fires start easily and will spread rapidly.)

Due to significant precipitation, dead fuels are well above average but are decreasing due to the current dry weather.

Temperatures/Relative Humidity (RH)

(When combined with other factors influencing the fire environment such as wind, steep topography, and low fuel moisture levels, hot temperatures and low RH can significantly increase the fire danger by increasing fire initiation, spread rates, burning intensity, and difficulty of control.)

Fall weather and shorter days have continued to moderate the fire danger overall due to an increase in cool, humid conditions.

Energy Release Component (ERC)

(ERC is an index related to how hot a fire could burn. It is directly related to the 24-hour, potential worst case, total available energy (BTUs) at the head of a fire. The ERC can serve as a good characterization of fire season as it tracks seasonal fire danger trends well. ERC has low variability, and is the best fire danger component for indicating the effects of intermediate to long-term drying on fire behavior.)

The recent rains and fall weather has increased the dead fuel moistures and decreased ERC values to well below average levels which has reduced relative fire danger.

Economic:

In an effort to coordinate local and state response to drought impacts the following surveys are being utilized by the County:

Drought Business Impact Survey

The San Luis Obispo County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) is gathering information on local drought-related job impacts. This is part of a statewide survey by the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency (LWDA) as part of an ongoing online survey to inform the Governor's Drought Relief Task Force of the drought's ripple effects. The WIB's Drought Business Impact survey is available at <http://sloworkforce.com/drought-survey/>. Local Workforce Investment Boards, workforce partners, and other local workforce entities are encouraged to complete the survey regularly to keep the Governor's Drought Relief Task Force up to date on the local area. The WIB is conducting outreach to chambers of commerce and other business services agencies for assistance in outreach to businesses and employers regarding the drought survey. Though the WIB is hearing that there are impacts, the county does not have any "reportable" impacts due to the State's requirements for reporting (i.e. specific business name, address, etc.).

Domestic Water Issues-Intake Form

The Governor's Drought Task Force created an online intake form for local, state, or tribal and federal agencies to document domestic water issues. The information is intended to inform and coordinate state response and mitigate drought impacts. Data collected is considered confidential and access is restricted. Individuals with domestic water issues are encouraged to contact County Environmental Health at (805) 781-5544.

Anonymous Supplemental Domestic Water Issues Online Survey

The County Drought Task Force created a supplemental anonymous survey. The survey does not ask for any identifying information and is intended to support our request for federal disaster assistance for individuals. Individuals who wish to remain anonymous are encouraged to complete the supplemental survey online www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update or by phone by calling (805) 781-5011.

To date, the County has received 77 responses to the supplemental survey. Of the 77 respondents, 33% report that one or more wells have gone dry and 11% report they are trucking in water. It is important to note that the survey is voluntary and as a result, responses are not representative of the county population.

STATE & FEDERAL KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM LAST MONTH

Initial State Water Project Allocation for 2015 Set at 10 Percent

On Monday, December 1, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an initial allocation of 10 percent for the customers of the State Water Project (SWP) for 2015. Due to improved precipitation forecasts, DWR established the initial allocation for 2015 at 10 percent, up from the five percent SWP allocated for its customers this past year. Should dry conditions return, DWR may reallocate SWP supplies to meet critical human health and safety needs.

Groundwater Resources Depleted by Drought

On Tuesday, December 2, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) released an updated report on groundwater basins that details groundwater level changes, potential water shortages, land subsidence, farmland fallowing and gaps in groundwater monitoring. For more information or to view the report visit <http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/index.cfm>.

Federal, State Agencies Plan Drought Operations for 2015

In preparation for a fourth year of drought, the directors of five federal and state agencies primarily involved in operating and regulating California's two biggest water projects, the federal Central Valley Project and the State Water Project, together have developed a strategy for potential implementation. State and federal agencies have developed a plan for 2015 operations and a summary of key lessons learned during 2014 in managing this extreme drought. For more information or to view the Interagency 2015 Drought Strategy visit <http://ca.gov/Drought/topstory/top-story-20.html>.

COUNTY DROUGHT TASK FORCE KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM LAST MONTH

County Office of Emergency Services:

San Luis Obispo County OES continues to coordinate with Cal OES to provide updates on the drought situation, respond to specific information requests to Cal OES, and coordinate local emergency needs. In addition, County OES continues to gather local situation status information and drought costs throughout the county in order to send the information to Cal OES.

Emergency Actions:

No new emergency actions have been taken specific to the drought in this reporting period.

County Facilities Usage & Conservation Actions:

Since the last update that county has taken the following actions:

- Fixture Replacement: To date, a total of 38 buildings have been retrofitted with low-flow fixtures, saving an estimated 3,500 gallons per week.
- Water Conservation: Staff responded to a call from the Ag Commissioner reporting a leak that resulted in replacement of a 200-foot section of corroded water line that ran beneath the parking lot. In addition, staff replaced a deteriorated water line at the Arroyo Grande Veterans building.
- Energy and Water Manager Professional Services Contract: The Energy & Water Manager Services contract was awarded by the Board on December 2 to Water Systems Consulting. Next step is to perform a utility bill analysis and collect data to find any anomalies with billing or data.
- County Parks: With the rainfall received and cooler temperatures staff has reduced watering on landscape and sports fields to a minimum.

Drought Contingency Planning:

The Public Health Department, the Public Works Department, and CAL FIRE/County Fire continue to develop plans to ensure there is adequate supply of water for firefighting and domestic water use in the event that a community does not have enough water. Water availability information from small public water systems has been categorized into three categories; Watch, Vulnerable, and Critical. The information has been placed into a GIS mapping layer for contingency planning. Environmental Health is surveying State regulated water systems to include in the GIS layer.

County Public Outreach Actions:

Information regarding current and upcoming drought relief programs for rural homeowners has been placed on the County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation webpage. Rural Development, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), delivers a number of programs to help improve the quality of life in rural communities throughout the nation. These programs may also help rural communities, businesses and individuals impacted by California's ongoing drought conditions. For additional resources and information on applying for any of these programs, please visit <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ca> or the County Drought Conditions and Water Conservation webpage at http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm.

In an effort to raise awareness about water supply issues and communicate the call for a 20% voluntary reduction in water usage, the County continues to examine multiple channels of communication for water conservation outreach efforts.

DROUGHT RELATED WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

County of San Luis Obispo Drought Conditions and Water Conservation
(http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/admin/Drought_Update.htm)

State's Water Conservation Campaign; Save our Water
(www.saveourh2o.org)

California's Drought Information Clearinghouse; Drought.CA.Gov
(<http://ca.gov/drought/>)

California Department of Food and Agriculture; Drought information
(www.cdfa.ca.gov/drought/)

California Department of Water Resources; Current Water Conditions
(www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/drought/)

California State Water Resources Control Board; Water Rights, Drought Info and Actions
(www.swrcb.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/index.shtml)

California Department of Public Health; Drinking Water CDPH Drinking Water Program
(www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/pages/dwp.aspx)

USDA Disaster and Drought Assistance Information; USDA Programs
(http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=DISASTER_ASSISTANCE)

UC Cooperative Extension Drought Information Resources; Drought Information Resources
(http://cesanluisobispo.ucanr.edu/Drought_Information/)

